

a.s.r. foundation

—  
2020



a.s.r.  
de nederlandse  
verzekerings  
maatschappij  
voor alle  
verzekeringen

Head of a.s.r. foundation Marijke Troost on 2020, the year in which everything changed

# 'We turned **the switch** and produced some **fine results** anyway'

**'People needed us more than ever but it was difficult to be able to do our work.' Marijke Troost and her team at a.s.r. foundation tried to keep going with as many social team activities and projects on financial self-sufficiency as possible, despite the Corona measures. 'This included donating laptops, developing online teaching programmes and facilitating volunteer work for smaller groups.'**

'The lockdown in March meant that many of our activities were cancelled,' says Marijke Troost, head of a.s.r. foundation. 'Instead of throwing in the towel, we took stock of what we could do. We turned the switch and produced some fine results anyway'.

The Foundation's activities are divided into two groups. The first group consists of projects on financial self-sufficiency. 'We are active during the National Reading-to-Children Days and with the ReadingExpress and we help people to make good financial choices. For example, we teach about money at primary schools during Money Week and at senior secondary vocational education schools through the LEF and MoneyWays programmes. Together with the Nibud, we also organise the financial education programme 'Ik krijg nooit wat' (I never get

anything!) and we help households with debts as Financial Volunteers at Home.' The second group consists of the social team activities (MTA). 'We facilitate activities from a team perspective. Together with your team, you can help by rolling up your sleeves. For example, you can help at children's farms by renovating stables and pruning bushes, but also by organising activities for the residents of old people's homes and care homes.'

## **Activities in modified form**

All activities normally take place physically. 'This was no longer possible. The team activities were difficult to organise because we were not allowed to visit these often vulnerable groups with several people at a time. In January last year before Corona, we organised a very successful reading-to-children day, with 143 colleagues reading

to children at Utrecht primary schools, but after that things became difficult.' The team started to think of alternatives and when the Corona rules eased a little in early June, they were able to restart the social team activities in a modified form. 'In consultation with the a.s.r. Corona crisis team, colleagues were no longer allowed to register as a team but had to do so individually. This way, we were able to send small groups to do volunteer work. Stadsboerderij Gagelsteede, Prinses Máxima Manege, Boomgaard 't Burgje, Reinaerde and Sherpa all received help from a.s.r. colleagues.' Organisations also developed new activities for which they called in the help of the Foundation. 'The Utrecht Volunteer Centre, for example, came forward with their initiative "Cooks cooking for Utrecht" and asked us if we had any volunteers who could deliver meals. Normally we don't do this, because it doesn't fit in with our strategy, but this time we did.'

## **Online teaching packages as an alternative**

As an alternative to physical financial lessons, the Foundation has collaborated on the online teaching packages for MoneyWays,

## ‘The number of families getting into financial trouble only increases due to Corona’

among others. ‘We have been trained in the online version of LEF and use the online packages for Money Week. Teachers can use these themselves with our support. We also adapted the workshop “Ik krijg noooit wat” (I never get anything!) to an online version. The recordings of this took place in the a.s.r. studio. Webinars are also being recorded to support the packages.’

The Financial Volunteer at Home programme will also continue online for the time being. ‘It is however more difficult to build a good relationship between the volunteer and the client. That is mainly because there is a screen between them. This creates more distance, while physical contact is essential in this project. Clients often come with piles of unopened mail that needs to be processed. This is only possible when you are sitting together.’ Marijke has also noticed that volunteers are becoming a bit tired of Teams. ‘When you have to attend meetings through Teams all day for your work and you also have to do that as a volunteer as well, it can drain your energy.’

### **Uncertain situation**

The Foundation team hopes above all that the uncertain Corona situation will not cause their projects to grind to a halt again. ‘The number of families facing financial problems is only increasing because of Corona. People lose their jobs and struggle to make ends meet. For this group, home education is also complicated because they often do not have a laptop. That is why we have made a.s.r. laptops available through Stichting Leergeld. It is a very sad that now that we are needed more than ever it is very difficult to do our work properly.’ •



# Activities a.s.r. foundation

- **Financial self-sufficiency: reading-to-children and teaching children and young people in order to promote their financial education and supporting households who have, or are at risk of running into problematic debts**
- **Helping by doing by deploying staff at social organisations**

## TEACHING

People who have not been taught how to handle money during childhood are twice as likely to have payment arrears and three times as likely to have payment problems as adults\*. That is why we believe financial education for children and young people is important.

\* Financial education and adult behaviour, Nibud (2016)



### Money Week

An initiative of *Wijzer in geldzaken* (More sensible when it comes to financial matters) in which a.s.r. has participated since 2012. Colleagues give a guest lesson about money or insurance to children in primary and senior secondary vocational education (MBO). This is done playfully and interactively with the Fix your Risk game and the teaching programmes Eurowijs and LEF. Unfortunately, due to Corona, no teaching could take place at schools in 2020.



### LEF

The LEF Foundation wants to give young people insight into their financial situation. LEF offers teaching modules about money and financial behaviour. a.s.r. is partner of LEF and colleagues are working as guest lecturers. In 2020 there are developed special online modules and training courses.



### MoneyWays

MoneyWays is a national MBO (senior secondary vocational education) teaching programme aimed at young people aged 14-24. This is necessary, because many MBO students have financial problems or even debts\*. The lessons on 'dealing with money' are given by peer educators, peers who have experience with financial challenges themselves.

To help them, they receive training and are assigned an a.s.r. buddy who is available online for insurance questions during the guest lesson. This has proven to be very effective.

\* Nibud, *Mbo'ers in geldzaken* (2015)



### Digital teaching package FC Utrecht

In 2018, a.s.r. foundation together with FC Utrecht Maatschappelijk launched the digital teaching package 'FC Utrecht learns' for groups 5 and 6 of primary schools. FC Utrecht players feature as role models in the package. a.s.r. made the financial education component possible. FC Utrecht has organised the lessons online as much as possible in 2020.



## **(online) Reading to children via ReadingExpress**

The ReadingExpress ensures that children who have difficulty with language receive extra attention. Colleagues are paired with a family where they are guests for 20 consecutive weeks. They meet each other either at home or online. Together with the parents, the volunteers work on language and reading (aloud) in order to give the children some extra help!

## **READING TO CHILDREN**

As many as half of the people with financial problems have the indication 'low literacy'. If a child grows up in a linguistically rich environment, there is less risk of low literacy\*. This is why we want to contribute to children's language development.

*\* Reading=/Understanding, University of Groningen and Stichting Lezen & Schrijven (2018).*



## **National Reading-to-Children Days**

During the National Reading-to-Children Days, colleagues read to children at the primary schools or day-care centres of their own sons, daughters, children of neighbours, etc. Colleagues also read to children at schools in Utrecht, in districts that need extra attention. The National Reading-to-Children Days are kicked off with a special reading breakfast at a.s.r.'s office and at FC Utrecht, where a player from the first team reads to the children. The 2020 edition took place just before the Corona pandemic.

## **HELPING BY DOING**

There are many vulnerable groups in the Netherlands who could use a helping hand. The civil society organisations that dedicate themselves to these groups often depend on volunteers to do something extra. a.s.r. foundation encourages colleagues to volunteer for this.



## **Incentive plan**

If colleagues volunteer for a civil society organisation, a.s.r. foundation can give them a helping hand with a financial contribution. Colleagues may submit an Incentive Plan once per calendar year.



## **Social team activities**

Colleagues can carry out a social team activity as a team. A calendar is drawn up annually with activities divided into two categories. 'Handen uit de mouwen' (Rolling up one's sleeves) is about doing odd jobs, pruning, painting or a day trip with, for example, elderly people, young people or people with disabilities. In 'Frisse Blikken' (Fresh Views), teams use their (professional) 'fresh views' to help civil society organisations with a strategic issue. In 2020, a.s.r. foundation organised a small number of Corona-proof outdoor activities.



# Activities a.s.r. foundation

## SUPPORT

At least 40 percent of Dutch people struggle with their financial administration, while a disorderly administration increases the chance of running into debt\*. That is why we support households with (the risk of problematic) debts and help parents with the financial upbringing of children.

*\* Financial administration in a digital age, Nibud (2018).*



### Financial Volunteer at Home

Helping households with payment problems with financial and administrative knowledge: that's what our Financial Volunteers at Home do! They help to put the administration in order. They support in making financial overviews or a financial planning, sorting mail, digital banking and applying for supplements. a.s.r. foundation cooperates in this with De Tussenvoorziening (for former homeless people), U Centraal and Humanitas to provide guidance to volunteers and clients.



### Workshop Life Events Pensions and Grip on Finance

Life events can cause payment problems due to a - temporary - drop in income. Life events are, for example, dismissal, divorce and pension. Together with U Centraal, a.s.r. volunteers give workshops to give people insight into their income changes.



### Financial education workshop

The workshop 'Ik krijg noooit wat' (I never get anything!) was developed by a.s.r. together with Nibud to help parents with the financial education of their children. During the workshop, parents talk about statements within five topics: pocket money, making choices, telephone, saving and safe payments. a.s.r. colleagues moderate the discussions with the groups of parents.

# Foundation figures 2020

## Difference in figures

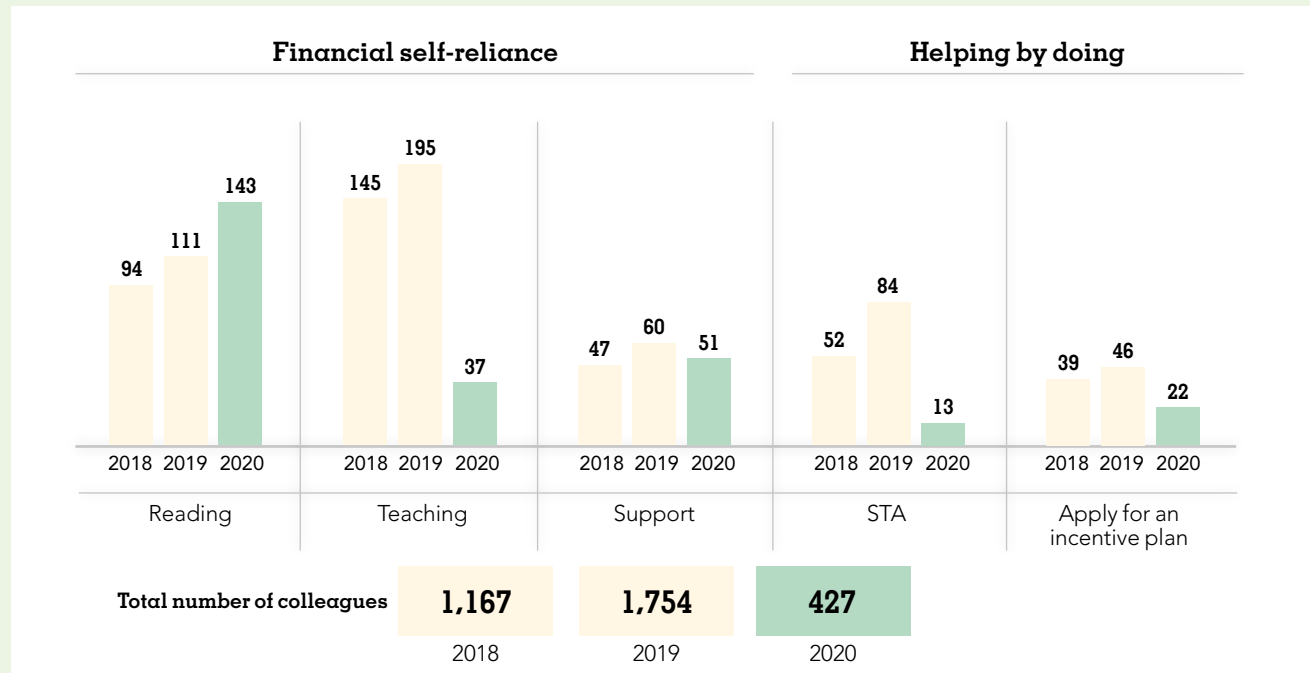
The Corona pandemic had a huge impact on the Foundation's activities in 2020. Colleagues were able to dedicate fewer hours to Foundation. For example, Money Week was cancelled and colleagues who are Financial

Volunteers at Home were unable to visit their clients for several months. The contact moments were mostly online. Also, fewer social team activities were organised since March 2020. This explains the difference between the 2020 figures and those of 2019 and 2018.

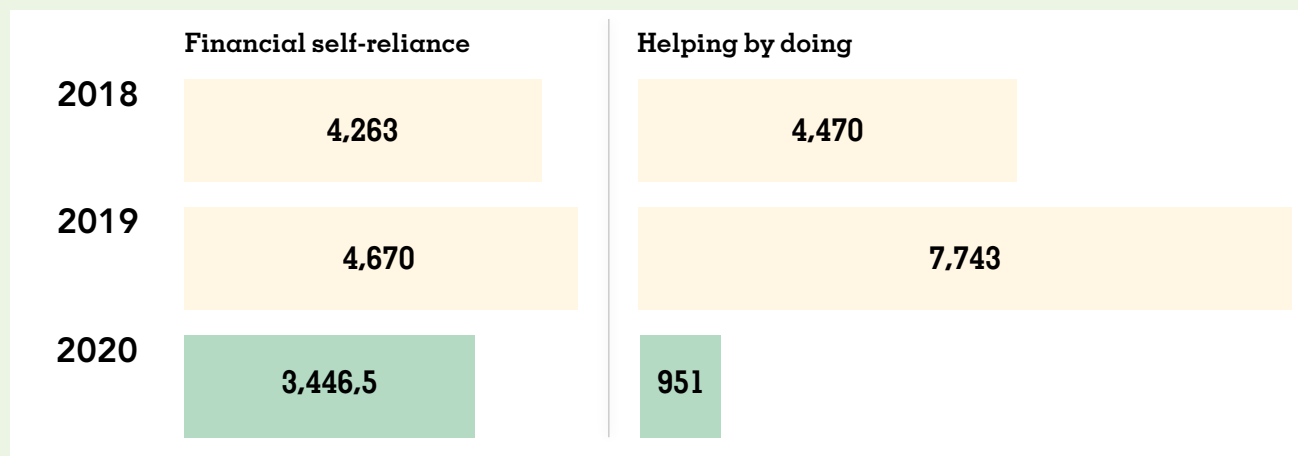
## Number of hours



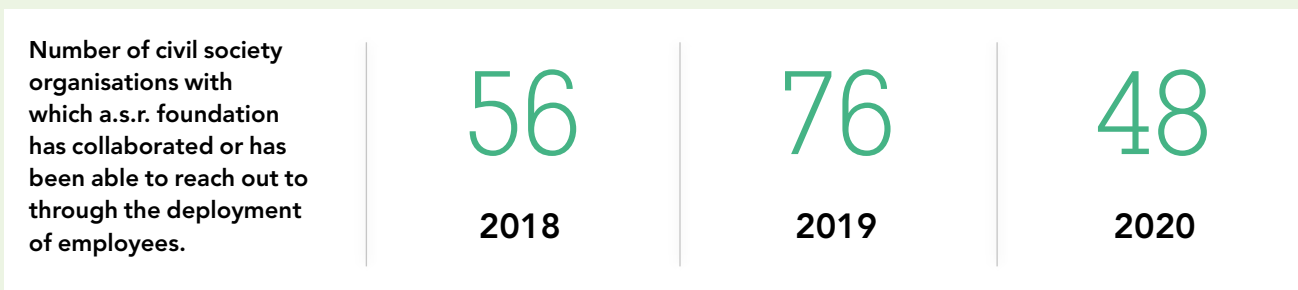
## Number of activities



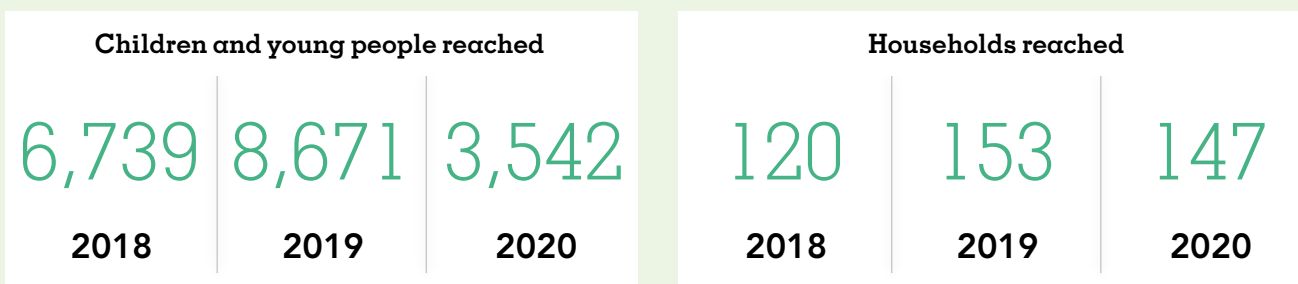
## Distribution number of hours



## Civil society organisations



## Scope





## Jos Baeten looks back on a difficult year for non-financial targets

'It is important to me that we have **employees** who consider it **important** to **help** people'

**Last year, a.s.r. employees were able to undertake far fewer social initiatives than usual. As a result, the annual increase of five percent in employee contributions to social initiatives via a.s.r. foundation was not achieved. Jos Baeten considers this very unfortunate, but there is not much that can be done about it. If it were something for which we could be blamed because we did not put enough energy into it, we should be ashamed, but this is really a matter of force majeure.'**

employees. If we believe that helping people by doing things is important, you also want to build this into your employees' DNA. For this reason we find it necessary to support social initiatives also outside of work and to ask colleagues to get involved.'

**The non-financial targets were set in 2018 and apply up to and including 2021. What was the original idea behind them?**

'We want to show what kind of company we are and what we consider important. In doing so, we have considered our stakeholders. That is, our employees, customers, shareholders and society as a whole.'

**Why is the commitment of employees to social initiatives valuable to a.s.r.?**

'This is because there has to be a balance between what we stand for as a company and what is important to our

We have formulated the targets based on the themes of sustainable employability, financial self-sufficiency and climate and transition. One of the targets is that we strive for a five percent annual increase of employee contributions to social initiatives through a.s.r. foundation. We believe it is important that colleagues do a little more for society every year. Last year, the pandemic made this a difficult target, which we failed to achieve.'

**Will a.s.r. be held to account for failing to achieve its five percent target in 2020?**

'Yes and no. We will drop a number of points in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, an index that monitors companies around the world in terms of sustainability. a.s.r. recently achieved a score of 81 points out of a maximum of 100, making us one of the 10 percent best-performing insurers. This score will now be lower, because this index only looks at whether or not you achieve your target. The reason why is not relevant. This is unfortunate but we cannot change this. If it were something for which we could be blamed because we did not put enough energy into it, we should be ashamed, but in this case it is really a matter of force

majeure. Whether we can achieve the 5 percent increase this year depends on whether we can do more in the second half of this year. For me, the important thing is not that we achieve the targets by all means, but that people feel free to do so. So if we let go of this target after this year, we will continue to encourage colleagues to remain socially involved via the foundation.'

**Does the Executive Board roll up its sleeves in this area too?**

'Absolutely. Individual Executive Board members have also made a contribution to financial self-sufficiency. I have devoted myself to care for the disabled for eight years and I have been involved in the Rotterdam theatre world for eight years. I also have a few other unpaid roles to which I give my time and energy. In addition, every year we try to do a team activity with the secretariat and the drivers that fits in with these social objectives. Unfortunately, we did not manage to do this last year either. Last time around, we helped a foundation for people with a mental disability with their garden maintenance. We always share a meal together afterwards.'

**a.s.r. foundation has been in existence for almost 12.5 years now. On to the next milestone?**

'Definitely. A foundation is important to me because as a company you pursue a certain philosophy. We have built it around 'helping by doing' and creating value for society. But then we also have to demonstrate this by suiting the action to the word. Employees really enjoy doing this kind of thing and I think it underlines our social positioning. a.s.r. foundation employs very passionate people who put their heart and soul into this and I think that's really great to see!' •



**ASR Nederland N.V.**

Archimedeslaan 10

Postbus 2072

3500 HB Utrecht

[www.asrnl.com](http://www.asrnl.com)

  
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